

The Story of the Banded Men

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The Story of the Banded Men

Chapter 1 - Of Ufeig and Odd his son.

A man named Ufeig dwelt westaway in Midfirth, at a stead called Reeks: he was the son of Skidi, and his mother was called Gunnlaug, whose mother was Jarngerð, daughter of Ufeig Jarngerðson, of the Skards in the north country. Ufeig was wedded to a woman called Thorgerði daughter of Vali; she came of great kin, and was a stirring woman. Ufeig was a wise man, and full of good counsel; he was great-hearted in all wise, but unhandy at money-getting; great and wide lands he had, but was scant of chattels; he spared not to give his meat to any, yet mostly was it got by borrowing what was needed for the household; he was thingman of Styrmir of Asgeir's-water, who was then held for the greatest chief west away there.'

Ufeig had a son by his wife named Odd, a goodly man, and of fair mien from his youth up, but small love he had from his father; he was but a sorry handy-craftsman. One named Vali also grew up in Ufeig's house; he was a goodly man, and a well-loved.

So Odd grew up in his father's house till he was twelve winters old, and mostly Ufeig had little to do with him, and loved him little; but the report of men ran that none of that country was of better conditions than Odd. On a time fell Odd to talk with his father, and craved of him help in money: "For I would depart hence: things have come to this," said he, "that of thee get I little honour, and to thee give I little help."

Ufeig answers: "I will not lay down for thee less than thou deservest; and I will go as close as I can to that, and then thou wilt know what avail it will be to thee."

Odd said that that would be but little to lean upon, and thus their speech had end. But the next day Odd takes a line down from the wall, and a set of fishing gear, and twelve ells of wadmal, and so goes his ways with no farewell to any. He fared out to Waterness, and fell into the company of fishermen, and craved of them such outfit as he needed most, either to borrow or to buy on credit; so that when they knew he was of good kin, and whereas he himself was a lad well-liked, they risked trusting him; so he bought all on credit, and abode there certain seasons a-fishing; and it is told that their luck was ever at its best with whom was Odd.

So he was there three winters and three summers, and was by then gotten so far, that he had paid back all that he had borrowed, and had gained for himself a good trading penny withal. He never went to see his father, and either of them went on as if he were nought akin to the other: he was well liked of his fellows.

So as it fell out he took to carrying goods north to the Strands, and bought himself the use of a keel, and so gathered goods : so his wealth increased speedily, till he owned the keel himself, and plied therewith between Midfirth and the Strands for certain summers, and now began to grow rich. At last he waxed weary of this work, and bought a share in a ship and fared abroad, and is now trading awhile, and still he did well therein, and flourished, and now hath won both wealth and the good report of men.

This business he followed till he owned a ship of burden and the more part of its lading, and still he went a-trading, and became a man of great wealth and good renown: oft was he with lords and men of dignity in the Outlands, and was well accounted of wheresoever he was. Now he became so rich that he had two ships of burden a-trading, and as folk tell, no chapman of his day was so wealthy as Odd,

and in his seafaring was luckier than other men. He never laid his ship northward of Eyiafirth or westward of Ramfirth.

Chapter 2 - Of Uspak's coming to Odd.

The tale tells that on a certain summer Odd brought his ship to Boardere in Ramfirth with intent to abide there through the winter: there was he bidden of his friends to settle at home in the land, and he did according to their desire, and bought land at Mel in Midfirth: there he set up a great household, and became bounteous in his housekeeping, which, as folk say, was deemed of no less worth than his seafaring aforetime; neither was any man so renowned as was Odd in all the north country. He did better with his wealth than most men; a liberal man to such as had need and were anigh him; yet did he nought for the comfort of his father: his ship he laid up in Ramfirth.

Men say for sure that no man of Iceland was ever so wealthy as was Odd; yea, that he had no less than any three of the richest; in every wise was his wealth huge; in gold and in silver, in land and in live-stock. Vali his kinsman abode with him, whether he were at home or abroad. So Odd abides at his house in all this honour aforesaid.

There was a man named Glum, who dwelt at Skridinsenni, betwixt Bitra and Kollafirth: his wife's name was Thordis; she was the daughter of Asmund, the Long-hoary, father of Grettir the Strong: theirson was Uspak, a man great of growth and strong, ill to deal with, and masterful; in his early days he began to go a-ferrying wares between the Strands and the north-country; he was a well-grown man, and soon became mighty of body. One summer he came to Midfirth and sold his take there; and on a day he gets him a horse, and rides up to Mel and there meets Odd; they greeted each other and asked for the common tidings, and Uspak said: "So goes it, Odd, that folk speak well of thy ways, and thou art much praised of men, and all deem themselves well-housed who are with thee; such luck am I hoping for, for I would dwell with thee."

Odd answered: "But thou art not much praised of men, nor art thou well-beloved: men deem that there is guile under thy brow, even as it was with thy kin before thee."

Answereth Uspak: "Prove it by trial, and take it not on hearsay of others; for few are better spoken of than their deserts: nor am I asking for a gift; I would have house-room of thee, but I will keep myself; so try how thou wilt like it." Odd answers: "Mighty are thy kin, and hard to reach if ye take it into your heads to turn on me; but whereas thou art earnest with me to take thee in, I will risk it for the space of one winter."

So Uspak took that with thanks, and went in the harvest-tide to Mel with his goods, and soon became friendly with Odd: he was of good avail about the stead, doing as much work as any two others, and Odd liked him well.

So wears the time, and in spring Odd bids him abide there, saying that he deemed it better so: Uspak was fully willing, and so he takes to overlooking the house, and things go on exceeding well, and folk make much to do about how well the man goes on; and he was in good favour with folk.

So standeth that house fair flourishing, and no man's fortune was deemed more worth than Odd's: one thing only seemed lacking for the fulfilment of his honour, a priesthood to wit: but in those days it was the custom for men to set up a new priesthood, or to buy one, and even so did Odd now: he speedily gathered thingmen to him, for all were fain of him. So are things quiet awhile.

Chapter 3 - Of Uspak's dealing with Odd.

Odd took Uspak to his heart, and let him pretty much rule over the household; he worked both hard and much, and was useful about the house.

So wears the winter, and Odd liked Uspak even better than before, because he took yet more things in hand. In harvest-tide he fetched in the sheep from the mountains, and they were well brought in, with none missing.

So weareth winter into spring, and then Odd gives out that he is going abroad in the summer, and says that his kinsman Vali shall take the household to him ; but Vali answers: "So falls it, kinsman, that I am not used to this, and I were liefer to deal with the money and the wares."

Now Odd turns to Uspak, and bids him take over to him the household. Uspak answers: u That would be over-much for me, how well soever things go, now thou hast to do therewith." Odd urges the matter, and Uspak excuses himself, as sorely as he desired to take it; so at last it came to this, that he bade Odd have his way, if he would promise him his help and furtherance. Odd says that he shall so deal with his possessions that he may wax the better man thereby, and be more highly favoured, and that he had put it to the proof that no man either could or would watch better over his wealth. Uspak bids him now to do according to his will, and so the talk ended.

Now Odd arrayed his ship, and let bear his wares thereto, and this was heard of, and in divers wise talked over.

Odd had no need to be long in getting ready. Vali went with him; and so when they were fully dight men lead him to ship. Uspak followed him the furthest, and they had many things to talk of: so when they were but a little way from the ship Odd said: "Now is there yet one thing which has not been settled."

"What is that?" said Uspak. "We have not seen to my priesthood," said Odd, "and I will that thou take it over."

"This is out of all reason," saith Uspak. " I am unmeet for this: already have I taken more things on my hands than I am like to handle or turn out well; there is no man so fit as is thy father; he is the greatest of lawmen, and exceeding wise." Odd says that into his hands he would not give it; "and I will have thee to take it," says he.

Uspak excused himself, and yet was fain to have it: then says Odd that he will be wroth if he take it not; wherefore at their parting Uspak took the priesthood.

So Odd fares abroad, and full happy was his voyage even as his wont was.

Uspak fares home, and this matter is talked of in diverse wise; and folk think that Odd hath given much power into the hands of this man.

Uspak rides to the Thing next summer with a company of men, and does well and helpfully there, and turns all due matters wellout of hand whereto he was by law bound, and rides thence with honour. He sus-tained his men in doughty wise; nowhere letting their part be borne down, nor were they downtrodden : he was kind and easy to all the neighbours, and there was no less plenty or hospitality at the stead than had been heretofore; nor was good housekeeping lacking thereto: and all went well. So weareth summer: Uspak rideth to the Leet and halloweth it; and when harvest comes, he fares to the fells when men go after their wethers, and they were brought in well, for the searching was careful,

and no sheep were missing, either of Odd's or any other man's.

Chapter 4 - Of dissension between Uspak and Odd.

It fell out that harvest that Uspak came north to Swalastead in Willowdale, where dwelt a woman called Swala, who gave him good entertainment; she was a fair woman and a young: she talked to Uspak, bidding him look to her matters; "for I have heard that thou art the best of husbandmen."

He took it well, and they talked much together, and either was well pleased with other, and they beheld each other blithely.

So their talk came to this, that he asked who had most to say in the giving of her in marriage. "Of such as are of any account," said she, "none is nigher to me than Thorarin the Sage, the Long-dale-folk's priest."

So Uspak rode to Thorarin, and was straightway greeted of him well, in a way; and there he set forth his errand, and wooed him Swala. Thorarin answers: "I cannot say I am eager for alliance with thee: folk talk in diverse wise about thy deal-ings. I can see that it is no good to beat about the bush with such men as thou; either must I break up her household, and have her hither; or else must ye do as ye will. I will have nought to do with it; nor will I deem myself as consenting to the match."

So thereon Uspak rides his ways, and comes to Swalastead, and tells Swala how matters stood: so they take their own counsel, and she betroths herself to him, and fares home with him to Mel; but they owned the house at Swalastead, and got men to take heed to it. So abideth Uspak at Mel, sustaining the bounteousness of the house; yet was he deemed a masterful man..

So weareth winter, and in spring came Odd into Ramfirth, once again full of wealth and good report of men: he came home to Mel, and looked over his possessions, and deems that they have been well heeded, and speaks well of that; and so wears on the summer.

But on a time Odd falls to talk with Uspak, saying that it were well for him to take his priesthood again. "Yea," said Uspak, "that was even the thing I was most unwilling to take up, and the most unfit to deal with; I am all ready to give it up; but I deem that men are mostly wont to do that at the Leets or the Things." Odd answereth: "So it may well be." Now neareth summer on to the Leet; and on the morning thereof when Odd awakes, he looks about, and findeth few men in the hall, and he has slept fast and long: so he sprang up and found that the men are clean gone from the hall, and deemed it marvellous, but said but little. So he arrayed him, and certain men with him, and rode away to the Leet; but when they came there, they found many men, but these well nigh ready to depart; and the Leet was hallowed. Odd changed countenance, and deemed this impudence marvellous.

Men ride home, and a few days wear away thence; but on a day as Odd sat at table with Uspak over against him, even as he least looked for it Odd sprang from the board, and at Uspak with axe raised aloft, and bade him give up his priesthood now.

Uspak answers: "No need of carrying the matter on with all this violence: thou mayest have the priesthood whenso thou wilt. I wotted not that thou wert so eager to have it" Therewith he stretches out his hand, and gives Odd the priesthood.

Now were things quiet awhile; but henceforth Odd and Uspak had little to do with each other; and Uspak was somewhat cross-grained of temper; and it is deemed that he was minded to have kept the priesthood from Odd, if he had not been cowed out of it when he could not get off.

Now Uspak did nought to help the housekeeping, and Odd never called upon him for any work, and neither spake to other.

So on a day Uspak gat him gone, and Odd made as if he knew it not, and in such wise they parted that no greeting passed between them. Uspak went to his house at Swalastead, but Odd made as if nought had happed, and so all is quiet a space.

Chapter 5 - Of the Slaying of Vali

The tale tells that in harvest-tide men fare up into the fells, and all changed was Odd's ingathering from what had been; for at this autumn folding he missed forty of his wethers, and they the best of his flock;. They were searched for wide over fell and heath, and were not found: men deemed this wondrous, for Odd was accounted luckier With his sheep than others so hard men drave the search that other countries as well as the home country were searched, and nothing done; and at last the matter dropped, but there was diverse talk as to how it came about.

Odd was sorry of cheer that winter season; so Vali his kinsman asked why he was nought glad : "What! dost thou take the losing of thy sheep so much to heart ? thou art not much of a man if such things grieve thee."

Odd answers: "I sorrow not for my wethers; but this I deem a worse matter, that I wot not who has stolen them." Vali answers: "Thinkest thou then that so it verily is; and whither, dost thou turn to most then?"

Saith Odd: "It is not to be hidden that I deem Uspak hath stolen them." Vali answers: "Far away then is your friendship fled from the time when thou settedst him over all thy goods.",. Odd said that that had been the greatest folly, and that things had gone better than might have been looked for. Vali said: " Many talked thereof as of a wondrous thing; but now. I will that thou lay not this so hastily to his charge; for there is a risk of rumour getting about, that it seems lightly spoken: now shall we make a bargain together that I will certify thee of the truth, but thou shalt let me deal therein as I will."

So they struck that bargain, and Vali went his ways with goods of his: he rides out to Waterdale and Longdale selling his goods, and was friendly and easy to deal with. So he goes his ways till he comes to Swalastead, and there has good entertainment, and all joyous was Uspak. But on the morrow Vali arrays him to depart, and Uspak led him from the garth, and asked many things of Odd, and Vali spake well of his doings. Uspak made much of him, saying that he was a bounteous man: "But came not some loss upon him last harvest?" Vali said that so it was.

"What is the guess about those missing sheep, such a lucky sheep-owner as Odd has been heretofore? " said Uspak. Vali answers: "The guessing is not all one way; but some deem it to have been the work of men."

Uspak says : "That is well to be deemed; and yet such tricks are but for few."

"Yea surely," saith Vali. Said Uspak : "Has Odd any guess about it?" "He saith but little thereof," said Vali, "but among other folk is there all the more talk how it was done." " As may well be," said Uspak.

"So it goes," said Vali, "after all we two have said, that some men say it is not unlike that thou must have had a hand in it; for they put it to-gether that ye parted in anger, and that the sheep were missing not long after."

Uspak answers: "I could not have thought that thou wouldst say such things; and but we were such friends as we be, I would avenge it sorely."

Says Vali: "There is no need to hide the thing, or to be so mad wroth : I have been looking over thy matters here; and thou mayest not put it from thee; for I can see that thou hast much more of stores than are like to be well gotten."

Uspak answered : "It will not be so proven: but what will our foes' words be, if our friends speak in this wise?"

Vali said: "This is not spoken unto thee in enmity, seeing that I speak to thy hearing alone; for now if thou wilt do after my will, and confess the matter, it shall fall but lightly on thee; for I shall find a way thereto: I have sold my wares wide about the country, and I will say that thou hast taken the money over, and bought therewith flesh-meat and other things: no man will misdoubt this, and I will so bring it about that thou shalt have no shame hereof, if thou wilt do after my counsel." Uspak said that he would not confess to it." Then will things go a worser road," said Vali; "but it is thine own doing."

Therewith they parted, and Vali fared home. Odd asked him if he had found out aught about the missing sheep, and Vali let out but little thereover.

Quoth Odd: "No need to hide now that Uspak has stolen them; for thou wouldst fain excuse him if thou mightest."

So wore the winter quietly: but when it was spring, and the Days of Summoning were come, Odd went his ways with twenty men, till he came anigh the garth of Swalastead; then said Vali to Odd: "Bait your horses here awhile, and I will ride to the house and see Uspak, if peradventure he be willing to make atonement, and then the case need go no further."

So did they, and Vali rides up to the house; there was no one without, and the door was open, so Vali went in: it was dark in the house, and all unwares of him a man leaps up from the bench and smites him between the shoulders, so that he falls straightway. Then cried Vali: "Save thyself, wretched man! Odd is hard by the garth, and is minded to slay thee: send thy wife to meet him, and let her say that we are at one, and that thou hast confessed to the matter; but that I have gone to call in moneys of mine out in the Dales."

Said Uspak: "This is one of the worst of deeds; I had minded it for Odd, and not for thee."

So Swala meets Odd, and tells him that they are at one again, Vali and Uspak; "and Vali bade thee turn back."

Odd believed it, and turned back and rode home.

Vali lost his life there, and his corpse was brought to Mel.

Odd thought the tidings great and evil; he gat shame thereof, and folk deemed it a miserable hap.

Uspak vanished away so that men knew nought what was become of him.

Chapter 6 - Odd sets on foot a Case against Uspak.

Here tells the tale that Odd set on foot this case at the Thing, and summoned the neighbours from home; but as it happened, one of those summoned died, whereon Odd summoned another in his place. Men fare to the Thing, and all is quiet till the courts are set: and when the courts were opened Odd put forth the case for the slaying, and all went smoothly till the defence was called.

Now hard by the courts sat two chieftains, Styr-mir and Thorarin, with their companies; and Styr-mir spake to Thorarin, and said : "Now are they crying on the defence in the blood-suit; wilt thou answer aught in the case?"

"Nay," said Thorarin, "I will not meddle herein, for meseems need enough drives Odd to take up the case and follow the blood-suit after such a man as Vali, when the man accused is belike the very worst of men."

"Yea," said Styrmir, "the man is not a good man verily, but thou art somewhat bound to him."

"I heed that nought" said Thorarin.

Styrmir said: "It is to be looked at in this wise also, that thou wilt have trouble with him after he is made guilty; only so much the more, and the harder to deal with : and it seemeth to me a thing to be seen to: so let us seek some rede, for we both of us see a flaw in the case."

"I have seen that for this long while," says Thorarin, " but it seemed to me unmeet to hamper the case."

Styrmir answers: "It toucheth thee the closest though, and folk will call it unmanly in thee if the case goeth forward now, when a defence from thee is urgent; and, sooth to say, it were well if Odd knew that there are others of account besides himself; he treadeth us all under foot, us and our thingmen so that he alone is told of: and it would be no harm if he found out what a wizard at law he is."

"Thou shalt have thy way," said Thorarin, "and I will help thee herein ; but I like not the look of it, and evil will come of it moreover."

"I will not turn from it for that cause," said Styrmir; and he springs up and goes to the court, and asks what is doing about the cases of men. So they told him, and he said: "So is it, Odd, that there is a flaw found in thy case, and thou hast set it afoot wrongly, whereas thou hast summoned thy ten witnesses from the country-side at home, which is against the law, for thou shouldst have done it at the Thing; now do thou one of two things: either go from the court with matters as they are, or stay, and we will put forth the defence."

Odd held his peace, and turned the matter over, and saw that it was but sooth ; so he goes from the court with his company, and home to his booth.

But as he came into the booth-lane there came a man to meet him : a man well-stricken in years, and clad in a black sleeve-cloak ready to drop to pieces, with but one sleeve on, and that cast aback behind: he had a pike-staff in his hand, and a slouched hat upon his head; he peered about from under it, and walked somewhat bent, smiting the staff down upon the ground; and lo! there was come old Ufeig, Odd's father.

Now Ufeig spake: "Early away from the courts then," says he. "It is not in one thing only that thou art happy; for everything thou dealest with runs swift and smooth off the reel. Well, so Uspak is found guilty then?" "Nay," said Odd, "he is not."

Ufeig said: "It is unmeet for a great man to mock an old carle like me ! Why is he not found guilty then? was he wrongfully accused?" "Nay, he did the deed sure enough," said Odd. "How then?" said Ufeig, "I thought the charge would stick to him: was he not Vali's banesman?"

"No one had a word to say against it," said Odd.

"Then why is he not found guilty?" said Ufeig.

"There was a flaw found in the case, and it came to nought," said Odd.

Says Ufeig : "How might there be a flaw in the case of a rich man like thee?"

"They said it was wrongly set on foot at home," says Odd.

"Nay, it could not be with thee in the case," said Ufeig; "yet it may be thou art better at getting money, and wandering about, than at pushing a law-suit. After all, though, I scarce think thou art telling me the truth."

Odd answers: "I care not whether thou believest me or not."

"Well, it may be," said Ufeig; "sooth to say, however, I knew when thou wentest from home that the case was wrongly set on foot; but thou deemedst thyself enough by thyself, and wouldst ask of no man: and now thou must be enough for thyself in this matter also ; but thou wilt get out of it well enough ; as it behoveth thee specially to do, who deemest all men dirt beside thee."

Odd answers : "One thing is sure, that I shall get no help of thee."

Said Ufeig: "If thou gettest any help in thy case it will be mine: how much wouldst thou spare thy money if any were to set thy case right for thee?"

Odd answers: "I would not spare money to him who would take up the case."

Said Ufeig: "Then let a heavyish purse drop . into the hand of this old carle; for folk's eyes are apt at squinting toward money." So Odd gave him a great purse, and Ufeig asked: "Was the defence put into court or not?" "No," said Odd, "we went away from the court first."

Ufeig answers : "The only good thing which thou hast done is that which thou hast done unwittingly." So they parted, and Odd went home to his booth.

Chapter 7 - Of the Guiles of Old Ufeig.

Now must it be told how master Ufeig goeth up by the meads unto the courts; he comes to the courts of the North-landers, and asks how go folk's cases: they told him that some were now doomed, and others at point to be summed up. Says he: "And how is it with the case of Odd my son : is it ended now peradventure? "

"Ended it is as much as ever it will be," said they,

Ufeig said;. "Is Uspak found guilty, then?" "Nay" said they, "he is not."

"What brought that about?" saith Ufeig.

"There was a flaw found in the case," say they; "it was wrongly set afoot."

"Yea," said Ufeig, "will ye give me leave to go into the court?"

They said yea thereto; so he went into the Doom-ring and sat down ; then said he: "Whether is the case of Odd son doomed?"

"Doomed it is as much as it ever will be," said they.

"How cometh that?" said Ufeig. "Is Uspak wrongfully accused? Slew he not Vali sackless? or could, it be that the case was not deemed urgent?"

They said: "There was a flaw in the case, and it came to nought." "What was the flaw?" said he. They told him. "Yea, forsooth," said he, "and deem ye that there is any right and justice in giving heed to such things of little worth, and to let the worst of men, a thief and a man-slayer, get off scot-free? Is it not taking a heavy weight upon you to doom him sackless who is fully worthy of death, and thus to give judgment contrary .to right?" They said that they did not deem it right, but that in suchwise it was laid down for them.

"Yea, indeed," said Ufeig; "did ye swear the oath?"

"Full surely did we," say they.

"So it must have been," said he; "and in what words will ye have sworn? Was it not in this wise, that ye would judge according to what seemed truest to you, and most according to the law? Even so must ye have sworn." They said that so it was.

Then said Ufeig: "And what may be more according to truth than to doom the worst of men to be guilty, worthy of death, and to be deprived of all aid: a man proven guilty of theft, and who moreover hath slain a sackless man, even Vali. But as to the third of those things wherewith your oath has to do, that indeed may be deemed somewhat uncertain. Yet think for yourselves which is more of worth, those two words which deal with right and truth, or the third which dealeth with but quibbles of law; and then will it surely seem to you as it verily is, and ye shall surely wot, that ye will have the more to answer for, if ye let one go free who is worthy of death, when ye have sworn an oath that ye would judge according to what ye know to be the right: and now look to it that it will weigh heavy on you else, and that ye will scarce escape answering to a hard matter."

Now whiles would Ufeig let the purse sink down from under his cloak, and whiles would he draw it up, and he found that they all kept casting an eye to the purse.

Then he spake to them: "It were better rede to judge according to right and troth, even as ye have sworn, and to have in return the thanks and love of all wise and upright men."

Therewith he took the purse and poured out the silver, and told it over before them : "Now will I show my friendliness toward you," said he, "and how I am thinking more of you than of myself herein ; and this I do because some of you are my friends, and some my kinsmen, and all of you moreover in such a case, that need is ye look to yourselves: to every man who sitteth in the court will I give an ounce of silver, and half a mark to him that sums up the case: and thus ye will both have gotten money, and put from you a matter heavy to answer to; and moreover, which is most of all, ye will have kept your oath inviolate."

They thought over the matter, and seemed to find truth in his words, and they had aforetime deemed themselves hard bestead in the matter of the straining of their oath: so they took the choice that Ufeig bade them. Then was Odd sent for, and he came by then the chieftains were gone home to the booths. So the case was set forth, and Uspak was made guilty, and witnesses named for the full filling of the doom; and therewith go men home to their own booths. .

Nought was heard hereof that night, but on the morrow up standeth Odd on the Hill of Laws, and saith in a loud voice: "Here in the Court of the Northlanders was a man found guilty of the slaying of Vali: Uspak is his name, and these are the tokens to know the guilty one by: He is great of growth, and a manly enough fellow. Dark brown is his hair, his cheekbones big, his brow swart; great-handed is he, thick-legged, and all his fashion is out of measure big, and his aspect most rascally." Now are men much astonished; many had heard nought thereof before, and men deem that Odd has handled his case, strongly and luckily, such a plight as it was gotten into.

Chapter 8 - Of the Banded Men.

Now is it told that Styrmir and Thorarin had speech together, and Styrmir said : "Great mocking and shame have we gotten from this case."

Thorarin said: "It was but what we might have looked for: but wise men must have been busy herein."

"Yea," said Styrmir; "seest thou any way now to set matters right?"

"I know not if it may be speedily done," said Thorarin.

"Well, what is best then?" said Styrmir.

Thorarin answers : "If the charge might be laid on them that money was brought into court, that would stick."

"Yea, yea," said Styrmir. Then they went their ways home to their booths.

Now they call together to council their friends and men allied to them; and thither came, first Hermund Illugison, secondly Gellir Thordson, thirdly Egil Skulison, fourthly Jarnskeggi Einar-son, fifthly Skeggbroddi Biarnson, sixthly Thor-geir Haldorason, and Styrmir and Thorarin withal. So these eight fall a-talking together, and Styrmir and Thorarin set forth the story of the case, and where it stood now, and what a booty would be Odd's wealth, whereby all their fortunes would be plenteously amended: so they determine to band together, and all to push the case to the awarding of outlawry or self-doom, and hereto they bind themselves by oath ; and they deem that this may not be overthrown, and that none may have heart or wisdom to rise up against it. With such talk they part, and men ride home from the Thing, and at first this is kept privy.

Odd was well pleased with his journey to the Thing, and the father and son are more at one now than heretofore: so Odd abideth in peace these seasons.

But in spring-tide he met his father, and Ufeig asked for tidings; but Odd said he had heard nought, and asked in turn what was toward; Ufeig says that Styrmir and Thorarin have gathered folk and are going to Mel a-summoning: Odd asks wherefore, and Ufeig tells him all their intent. Odd answers : "It seemeth to me no such heavy matter." Ufeig says : "Well, maybe it will not be beyond thy strength."

So weareth time to the summoning-days, and then come Thorarin and Styrmir to Mel with many men; and Odd also had a great company there. They put forth their case then, and summoned Odd to the Althing, for that he had caused money to be borne into the courts unlawfully: nought else betid to tell of there, and they rode away with their company. Yet again it befell that the father and son met, and talked together, and Ufeig asked if it still seemed a thing of nought; and Odd answers : "Nay, I deem it no such heavy matter." "Otherwise it seemeth to me," saith Ufeig; "knowest thou clearly to what pass things are come?"

Odd said he knew of what had come to pass,

Ufeig said : "More will come of it, meseemeth, because six other chieftains of the greatest have joined themselves to them."

"Great strength they seem to need against me," quoth Odd.

Said Ufeig : "What will thy rede be now?"

"What," said Odd, "save to ride to the Thing and seek aid."

Ufeig answers : "It seemeth to me nought hopeful, in such a plight as things now are, to stake our honour on having the greater number of folk."

"What is to be done then?" said Odd.

Ufeig says : "My rede it is that thou array thy ship while the Thing is toward, and be ready with all thy loose goods, and have them aboard by then men ride from the Thing. And now which of thy money deemest thou gone a worsen road, that which these shall take from thee, or that which I shall have?"

"Well, that is something saved out of the fire that cometh to thee," saith Odd; and therewith he giveth his father a heavy purse of silver, and they part. Odd arrays his ship, and gets men thereto: and so weareth time toward the Thing. But these plots went on privily, so that few heard thereof.

Chapter 9 - Of Ufeig and the Banded Men.

Now ride the chieftains to the Thing, and many are with them: goodman Ufeig was of Styrmir's company. The Banded Men bespoke a meeting of them on Bluewood-heath, and these met there, Egfl, Styrmir, Hermund, and Thorarin ; and now they ride all in a company down to the Thing-mead. But these ride from the east, Skeggbroddi and Thorgeir Haldorason of Bathdale; and from the north Jarnskeggi; and they meet by Reydamuli, and all the companies of them together ride down into the Meads, and so to the Thing.

There turns all the talk on Odd's case, and all men deem there will be none to answer it, thinking that few dare it, and none may carry it through in the teeth of such great men as there are against him; but their own case they deemed fair enough, and more than enough they bragged about it; and no man had a word to say against them.

Odd charged no man about his case: he dight his ship for sea in Ramfirth so soon as men were gone to the Thing.

On a day went master Ufeig from his booth : he was full of trouble, seeing no man to help him, and thinking his case heavy to push : scarce could he see any way for him alone to deal with such great men ; and in the case was no defence; he went all bent at the knees, and wandered stumbling among

the booths. Thus fared he a long while, but came at the last to the booth of Egil Skulison ; and men were come thither to talk with Egil, so Ufeig hung about the booth doors, and waited till the men were gone away. Egil followed them out, and when he was going in again, Ufeig turned and met him, and greeted him, Egil looked on him, and asked him who he was: "Ufeig am I called," said he.

Egil said : "Art thou the father of Odd?"

He said that so it was. "Then wilt thou be a-talking of his case; but it will be waste of words, for the matter is too much done with for me to help thee aught; and other men than I have more to do with the case, Styrmir and Thorarin to wit; they take the more part of the ruling thereof, though we follow them forsooth."

Ufeig answered, and there came a word into his mouth:

Seemly was it
Of my son to think once;
Never fared I
Odd to further:
But little the fool looked
Into law-learning,
Though full enow
Of fee he gathered.

And again he sang :

Sport I hold it,
The old home-abider,
To speak a little
With the sage of men-folk;
Gainsay me not
A little speech now,
For worthy indeed
And wise thou art holden.

"Nay, I shall find other sport than talking of Odd's affairs; time was they were hopefuller than now, and thou wilt not gainsay me speech, for it now is the old carle's chiefest joy to talk with such men as thee, and so wear away a little time."

Egil answers : "I will not forbid thee speech." And they go in together, and sit down.

Then Ufeig takes up the word: "Art thou a householder, Egil?" Egil said that so it was.

"Ah, and thou dwellest at Burg?"

"So is it," said Egil.

Ufeig said: "What I hear told of thee is good, and much to my mind: for they say that thou grudgest meat to no man, and keepest good house, so that it fares not unlike with us twain ; either of us being men of good kin and good conditions, but not handy at money-getting; yea, and they say withal that thou art good at need to thy friends."

Egil answered: "It likes me well to be accounted of even as thou art; for I wot that thou art a wise man and of great kin."

Ufeig said: "Herein though are we unlike: thou art a great chieftain, and fearest nought for anything that may be in thy way, and wilt never shrink from holding thine own with whomsoever thou hast to do; whereas I am but a nobody: nevertheless my mind is as thy mind, and great pity it is of men who hold themselves so high, that they should lack money."

Egil answered : "Maybe that shall be changed shortly, and my fortune amended."

"How comes that?" said Ufeig.

"Why thus, meseems," said Egil, "that if we get hold of Odd's money, little shall we lack, for great things are told us of his wealth."

Ufeig answers: "Overmuch would not be said of it though he were called the richest man of Iceland. But thou wilt be wishful to know what thy share thereof will be; and indeed thou art in most sore need of the money."

"True," said Egil, "and thou art a good carle, and a wise, and wilt know clearly about Odd's money." He answered : "It is to be looked for that others should not know more thereof than I; and I can tell thee that it is more than the most that can be said of it; but I have been thinking what thy share thereof will be."

And therewith came a song into his mouth:

Eight great ones surely gripeth Gold greed and wrongful doing, Though words be not well fitting To us who once were wealthy. Yet, lords of loud shields clashing, I rede you leave your laughter O'er the deed ye deem a great one, Nor drag to light your shaming.

"Scarcely will that speedily be," says Egil, "yet art thou a good scald."

Said Ufeig: "I will not delay the showing thee what thy share of the good fortune will be : neither more nor less than the sixteenth part of the lands of Mel."

"Hearken to the fool," said Egil; "what? is not the money as much as is said, then? or how may that be?"

Ufeig answers: "Nay, there is money enough, yet meseemeth that is just what thou wilt get: have ye not determined that ye are to have half of Odd's wealth between you, and the men of the Quarter the other half? Wherefore I am reckoning that there will be the half of the lands of Mel to be shared between the eight Banded Men of you : for so will your intent have been, and so will ye have settled it, with whatsoever unexampled rashness ye have taken up the case. Or were ye perchance deeming that Odd my son would sit quietly at home awaiting your onset, when ye should be going north-away? Nay," said Ufeig, "ye shall not come upon Odd unready; and as good as he is at money-making, yet lacketh he not for cunning and shiftiness at need. And no less belike shall the keel beneath him drive through the Iceland main because ye call him guilty, as guilty he is not; for the case against him has been wrongfully taken up, and it shall fall on their heads who have meddled in it. Well, I deem he will be on the sea by now with all that he hath, saving the land at Mel, which he hath left behind for you ; and he had heard tell that it is no great way up from the sea to Burg if he should happen into Burgfirth."

"Well, the case will end as it began, and ye will have shame and dishonour of it, and most meetly too, for every man will blame you."

Said Egil: "I see it as clear as day, and how that there are two in the game. Verily, it was not to be looked for that we should catch Odd shiftless; and no great matter I deem it; for there are some in the case, the most pushing in it, whom I would be well content to see shamed,. Styrmir to wit, or Thorarin, or Hermund."

"Yea," said Ufeig, " it shall come to pass as is meet and right, that they shall have blame hereof of every man; but it misliketh me that thou shouldst come off ill, who art so much to my mind, and the very best of you Banded Men." Therewith he let a big purse of money sink down from under his cloak, and Egil's eyes turned towards it; Ufeig noted that, and drew it up again under his cloak at his swiftest, and spake: "In such wise go matters, Egil, that I look for the thing to go just as I have told thee: but now will I doadeed in thine honour." And with that he unwinds the purse and pours out the silver into Egil's cloak-skirt, two hundreds of silver, the best that might be. "This shalt thou have of me if thou wilt be not against our case, and this is somewhat of an honour to thee."

Egil answers: "Meseemeth thou art no little rascal: it is not to be thought of, that I will break my oath."

Ufeig answers: "O, ye are not what ye deem yourselves : ye would be called chieftains, but have no shift to turn to when things are gotten crooked. Thou shalt do none of this; for I will hit upon a rede whereby thou shalt keep to thine oath."

"What is it?" said Egil.

Ufeig said: "Have ye not determined that ye will have either outlawry or self-doom in the case?"

Egil said that so it was.

"Well, it may be," said Ufeig, "that we, Odd's kindred, shall be allowed to choose which it shall be, and then it might be brought about that the giving of the award shall come to thee; and then would I have thee make it easy."

Egil answers: "Thou sayest sooth, and art a cunning carle, and a wise ; yet am I not quite ready hereto, having neither might nor men to withstand all these chieftains alone : for their enmity for this will fall on whomsoever riseth up against them."

Ufeig said: "How would it be were another in the matter with thee?"

"Things would go better then," said Egil.

Said Ufeig: "Whom wouldst thou choose of the Banded Men? think of them as if the whole company of them were in my hand."

"Two there are," said Egil; "Hermund is my nearest neighbour, but we are not of good accord; the other is Gellir, and him would I choose."

"That is a hard piece of work," said Ufeig, "for I wish all of them ill-luck from this case except thee alone: but he will be wise enough to see which is best to choose, to gain money and honour there with, or to lose the wealth, and win, the shame. So now wilt thou be in this matter, so as to lessen the award if it come to thee?"

"Well, I have a mind to it," said Egil.

"Then shall it be a settled matter between us", said Ufeig, "for I will come back hither to thee in an hour's space."

Chapter 10 - Of Ufeig and his Talk with Gellir.

So departed Ufeig from Egil, and went his ways: he went wandering among the booths, still somewhat dragging of gait, howbeit not so downcast of heart as tottering of foot, and nought so easily tripped in his case, as he is lame of foot. At last he cometh to the booth of Gellir Thordson and has him called out; he came forth, and greeted Ufeig first, for he was a lowly-mannered man, and asked what his errand was; Ufeig answers: "I was just wandering about here."

Gellir said: "Thou wilt be wanting to talk about Odd's case?" "Nay," says Ufeig, "I will not be talking of it: I wash my hands of it: other pastime, I would have than that."

Gellir said; "What wilt thou talk of then?"

Ufeig said: "I hear say that thou art a wise man, and good game I deem it to talk with wise men."

So they sit down together and fall to talk, and Ufeig asks: "Which of the young folk in the west country deemest thou like to turn out a great man?"

Gellir said there was good choice of such, and named the sons of Snorri the Priest and the Ere-men. "I hear tell" said Ufeig, "that so it is; and moreover I am now come to the right place to learn tidings, whereas I am now talking to a man both truthful and straightforward: but now which of the women west-away there are accounted the best matches?"

Gellir named the daughters of Snorri the Priest, and of Steinthor of Ere.

"So I hear tell," said Ufeig; "and yet, how comes it? hast thou ne'er a daughter?"

Gellir said yea, certes he had.

"How was it that thou namedst her not, then?" said Ufeig; "sure none shall be fairer than thy daughters, if likelihood shall rule: are they unwedded yet?"

"Yea," said he. "How comes that?" said Ufeig.

Says Gellir: "Because no one has come a-wooing as yet, who was both wealthy and a man of rule over folk, of great kin and of good conditions: for though I be not a wealthy man in money, yet am I hard to please because of my high blood and great honour. But come, let us talk the matter down to the bottom by question: what man of the north country is likely for a chieftain, thinkest thou?"

Ufeig answers: "There is good choice of men: first I account Einar Jarnskeggi's son, or Hall Styrmir's son; yea, and some there are who deem Odd my son like to be somewhat; and herewith am I come to the word he bade me give thee, that he would ally himself with thee, and wed Ragnheid thy daughter."

"Yea, yea," said Gellir; "time was when that would have won a good answer, but as things go now it must be put off, meseemeth."

"How so?" said Ufeig.

Said Gellir: "Well, as things go, thy son Odd rseemeth somewhat under a cloud."

Ufeig answered: "I tell thee of a sooth thou wilt never wed her better: none may gainsay it that he is as well of manners as the best, nor lacketh he either for wealth or good kin: thou moreover art pretty much of a lack-penny, and it might well be that thou shalt be strengthened in him, a man most great-hearted to his friends."

Gellir says: "The thing might be looked at, but for this suit that hangs over him."

Ufeig answers: "Speak not of that wretched matter, which is for nought but the shame and disgrace of all such as have meddled therein."

Gellir answers: "None the less it is to be looked for that it will go otherwise; so I will not assent to the match, though if the suit might be got rid of, I were full fain thereof."

Answereth Ufeig: "Belike, Gellir, ye shall all make your fortunes out of this, and I may as well tell thee what thy share shall be, for I know all about it: well, at the best ye eight Banded Men will have half of the lands of Mel between you: nor do I deem thy share then a good one; the gain of a little wealth to wit, and the loss therewith of good report and manliness; thou who wert called erewhile one of the best of men in the whole land."

Gellir asked how that might be, and Ufeig answered: "Meseemeth, forsooth, that Odd is now at sea with all he hath, save the land at Mel: it was not to be looked for that he would lie shiftless before you, and should let you pick and choose in all between you.

"Nay," quoth Ufeig, "rather said he that if he should come to Broadfirth he might happen on thy house, and then could he wive himself out of thy walls; and he said moreover that he had tinder enough to burn up thy house if he would: yea, or were he to be in Burgfirth, he hath heard tell that it is no great way up from the sea to Burg; or, quoth he, if he came into Eyiafirth he might stumble upon Jarnskeggi's stead; or in likewise should he come unto the Eastern-firths, he might come across Skeggbroddi's dwelling: nor maketh he much account of it if he never come back to Iceland again : but ye shall have out of all this a meet lot, shame to wit, and dishonour; and ill I deem it that a chieftain so good as thou should be so evilly bestead, and fain had I spared it thee."

Gellir answered : "Yea, it will be true enough belike; and I should heed it little though the getting of the money slipped through: for herein I let myself be drawn by my friends rather than that my heart was set on it."

Ufeig said: "So wilt thou look on it as soon as thou growest cool, that thou wilt deem it the more honourable part to wed thy daughter to Odd my son, even as I said at the first: lo! here is the money that he sent thee, saying that he himself will pay her dower, for he knoweth thee a poor man: two hundreds in silver, lo! and such silver as may scarce be gotten. Note now what a man offers thee this choice! to wed thy daughter, and he himself to pay her dower; and for thyself, it is most like he will never use thee miserly; while thy daughter hath gotten all good fortune."

Gellir answered: "This is a thing so great that it is hard to value; but for nought can I bring myself to betray those that trust me: yet see I that nought will come of it but mocking and scorn."

Then answered Ufeig: "Wondrous wise forsooth are ye great men! who asked of thee to betray them that trust in thee? or tread thine oath under foot? Nay but mayhappen the award shall come into thine hands, and then mayest thou make it little, and yet hold to thine oath."

Gellir said: "True is that, and thou art a shifty carle, and wondrous cunning: yet may I not alone fly in the face of all these men."

Ufeig said: "How would it be if I got another to be with thee? wouldst thou help the case then?"

"That will I" said Gellir, "if thou bring it about that I have a hand in the award."

Ufeig said: "Whom dost thou choose to be with thee?"

Gellir answers: "Egil will I choose; he is nighest allied to me."

"Folly," said Ufeig, "to choose him who is worst of all your company; I were loth indeed to give him any honour, and I wot not whether I will set my hand to it."

"Have thine own way then," said Gellir.

Ufeig said: "Wilt thou take up the case if I bring him into it with thee? for meseemeth he will have wits to know whether it is good to take honour or not"

"Seeing my good bargain," said Gellir, "I am minded to risk it."

Said Ufeig: "Then have Egil and I talked the matter over already, and he deemed it nought hard to handle, and is come into the case. So now shall I counsel thee what to do. The company of you Banded Men are ever wont to go to church together, nor will any man misdoubt it though thou and Egil talk what ye will as ye go to evensong."

So Gellir took the money, and all is settled between them.

Then Ufeig went his ways towards Egil's booth, going neither slowly nor swerving about, nor bowed down; and he telleth Egil how the matter standeth now, and that liketh him well.

So afterward in the evening men go to evensong, and Egil and Gellir talk the matter over, and settle all between them, and no man misdoubted of it any whit.

Chapter 11 - Of the Award at the Thing.

Now it is to be told that on the morrow men go to the Hill of Laws, and a great crowd is there; and Egil and Gellir gather their own friends together: Ufeig was of the company of Styrmir and Thorarin.

So when such as were looked for were come to the Hill of Laws, Ufeig craved silence and said: "Heretofore have I meddled not in this case of Odd my son; but now I wot that here are those men who have been busiest in pushing the case. Of this charge I first of all appeal Hermund: though forsooth the case hath been set on foot with more wrong and rashness than men have yet to tell of; and in likewise has been carried on, and in likewise maybe will end. But now I will ask this: Whether may the case be settled peacefully?"

Hermund answered: "We will take nought save selfdoom."

Said Ufeig : "It is a thing unheard of that one man in one case should give selfdoom to eight men; but that one should give it to one, that hath been heard of; but whereas this case hath been pushed in a more masterful way than any other, I will now crave that two of thy company be judges."

Hermund answered : "We will say yea to this, nor heed aught which twain shall adjudge."

"Then ye will not begrudge me this small honour," said Ufeig, "to choose the twain whom I will of you Banded Men?"

"Yea, yea, so let it be," said Hermund.

Then said Thorarin : "Say yea to such things only to-day as thou ruest not to-morrow."

"I will not call my words back," said Hermund.

Now Ufeig seeks for sureties, and they were not hard to find, for the money was deemed to be in a sure place.

Then men take hands, and they give hansom to the Banded Men of such fines as they whom Ufeig shall name may award, and the Banded Men hansom the voiding of the case. Now it is so determined that the Banded Men shall go out on to the fields with their company, and the folk of Egil and Gellir held together.

So they sat down in a ring in a certain place, and Ufeig goeth into the ring, and peereth round about, and lifteth his cloak-hood: he standeth with his belly somewhat thrust out, stroking his arms ; he peereth round about with his eyes, and then saith:

"There sittest thou, Styrmir, and men will deem it wondrous if I choose thee not for this case which is on my hands ; for I am of thy thingmen, and to thee should I look for helping, and many good gifts hast thou had of me, and rewarded everyone of them with ill. Methinks thou wert the first to shew thine enmity in this matter unto Odd my son, and it was thy doing chiefly that the case was set on foot. So thee will I set aside.

"There sittest thou, Thorarin ; nor may any lay to thy charge that thou lackest wit to deal with this case : yet hast thou brought unthrift on Odd in this case, and with Styrmir wert the first to set afoot the case. Therefore thee will I not choose.

"There sittest thou, Hermund, a great chieftain! and forsooth the case were meetly handled if thou hadst the handling of it: yet hast thou been the eagerest of men herein from the beginning, and clear as day it is that thou wouldst have our dishonour clear as day; nor hath -aught drawn thee hereto saving shamelessness and greed; for nought lackest thou of wealth. So thee I set aside.

"There sittest thou, Jarnskeggi! and art nought lacking in pride to judge the case; and well enow: wouldst thou be pleased to be master herein ; thou, who wert of such pride that thou lettest bear a banner before thee at the Vodla-thing, as before a king. Yet shalt thou not be king in this case; and thee do I set aside."

Now Ufeig casts his eyes about and says: "There sittest thou, Skeggbroddi! is it true that King Harald Sigurdson said when thou wert with him that he deemed thee the meetest for a king of all men out here?"

Broddi answered: "Oft would the King talk well to me, but it is not so sure that he meant all that he said."

Then said Ufeig: "Thou shalt be king over other matters than this case, and thee do I set aside."

"There sittest thou, Gellir," said Ufeig, "and nought hath drawn thee into this case save greediness of money only ; but verily it is small blame to thee, so penniless as thou art, and so much as thou hast to do. And now, though ye be all worthy of ill, yet see I not but that some honour must be given to somebody; for now are but few left, and I am loth to choose from them whom I have set aside already; therefore thee I choose, because thou hast not heretofore been known for a wrongful man,

There sittest thou, Thorgeir Haldorason, and it is well known that no case ever fell to thy judging that was of any account; for nought canst thou mete out judgment, having no more wits thereto than an ox or an ass ; and thee then I set aside."

Then Ufeig looked round about, and there came a stave into his mouth:

Evil it is

When eld falleth on us, Snatching away Wisdom and eyesight; From eight men of avail Might I have chosen, Now on hook hangeth Nought but the wolf's-tail.

"Yea," said he, "I fare as the wolves, who eat on till they come to the tail, unawares : I have had the choice of many chieftains, and now is he alone left whom all will think an evil choice; and true indeed it is that he is unjuster than any, and heedeth not one thing more than another whereby he getteth money, so only he get it at last: yet is it pity of him, though he hath not been nice aforetime, that he should have fallen into this, where-, into so many are fallen, who have heretofore been called righteous men, and yet now have cast aside manliness and uprightness to follow after wrongdoing and greed.

"Well, none could have it in their heads that I should ever choose him, from whom all men look for evil, for no man of your fellowship is wilier: yet so it has to be, for all the rest have been set aside."

Then said Egil, and smiled withal: "Now yet again shall it be, as oft afore, that honour befalleth me, not because others will it: but now, Gellir, it behoveth us to stand up and go apart, and talk the matter over between us."

So did they, and went away thence, and sat down ; then said Gellir: "What shall we say about it?"

Egil said: "It is my rede that we award a little money fine. I know not what else may come of it, but of a sooth it will not be friendship for us."

"Will it not be full enough," said Gellir, "if we award thirteen ounces of evil silver? for most unrighteously was the case set afoot; and the worse they like it, the better it is : yet am I not fain to give out the award; for meseemeth we shall be evil looked on."

"Do which thou wilt," said Egil; "give out the award, or sit to outface the answers."

"Then I choose to give out the award," said Gellir.

And therewith they go to meet the Banded Men.

Then said Hermund: "Stand we up and hearken to the shaming."

Said Gellir: "Later on we shall wax no wiser, and it all comes to this, that we, Egil and I, award thirteen ounces of silver to us Banded Men."

Then said Hermund: "Heard I aright: saidst thou thirteen tens of silver ounces?"

Answereth Egil: "Wert thou then a-sitting on thine ear, Hermund, since thou stoodest up? Thirteen ounces good sooth, and that of such money as none but a wretch would take: paid shall it be in scrapings of shields and scraps of rings; yea, in all that is most worthless, and shall like you least."

Said Hermund: "Thou hast betrayed us, Egil." "Yea," said Egil, "dost thou deem thee betrayed?" "Betrayed I deem me, and thou it is hast betrayed itie," said Hermund.

Egil answered: "It likes me well to betray him who trusteth no man, nay, not even himself: me-seemeth my tongue may find a true tale thereof; for in the thickest of fogs thou didst hide away thy money, with the mind that if ever it came into thy heart to look for it, thou mightst not find it."

Said Hermund: "This is like the rest of thy lying, like as thou saidest in the winter-tide, Egil, when thou earnest to me at my bidding from thy wreck of a house at Burg in Yule-tide: and right glad wert thou thereat, as was like to be; and when Yule was spent, thou grewest sad, as was like to be, thinking it hard to have to go home to that misery: but I, when I saw that, bade thee abide still, thou and another with thee; and thou tookest that, and wert fain thereof: but in spring-tide after Easter, when thou wert come home to Burg, thou saidst that thirty ice-horses had died, and had all been eaten by us."

Egil answered: "I know not how over-much may be said about thy misery; otherwise I believe little or nothing was eaten of them: but all men wot that I and my men lack never for meat, how-beit that I find it not so easy to come by money: but such is the housekeeping at thy house, that thou needest say nought about it."

"I would well," said Hermund, "that we twain were not at the Thing another summer."

"Now will I say," said Egil, "what I never thought to say, and bid bless thine opening mouth! for it was foretold of me that I should die of old age, and all the better were I content if the trolls took thee first."

Then said Styrmir: "He sayeth soothest of thee, Egil, who sayeth worst, and calleth thee a cheat."

"Now we get on well," said Egil: "the more thou blamest me and the truer thou deemest it, the better it liketh me; for I have been told that when for your ale-joyance ye would play at the mating of men, thou wouldst pair thyself with me. Well, it is indeed true that thou hast certain wiles about thee whereof other men wot not; thou must know thine own heart best: but in one thing are we unlike: for either of us hath promised the other help at need, and I have given it when I might, and have in nought spared me, but thou rannest so soon as the blackshanks were aloft. True it is also that I have ever been unthriving in my house, yet grudge I meat to no man, while thou art a meat-begrudger; and for a token thereof hast a vessel called Meatluck, and no man who cometh into thy garth knoweth what is in him but thyself alone. Now it is but meet to me that my house should have hard times when lack is, but less than meet for a man to pinch his house when lack is not. Think now what man this is!"

Then Styrmir held his peace, and Thorarin stood up, but Egil said: "Hold thy peace, Thorarin, and sit down and lay not another word hereto! Else will I lay such a word on thee as thou hadst been better silent. I see nought to laugh at in it, though the lads laugh, that thou sittest pinched up with thy thighs glued together."

Thorarin said: "Wholesome rede will we hold to, whencesoever it cometh." And he sat down and held his peace.

Then spake Thorgeir; "All may see that this award is without reason and foolish, to award thirteen ounces of silver and no more in so great a case."

"But I had thought," said Egil, "that thou hadst seen reason enough in the award; and so wilt thou, if thou think about thyself therewith; for then wilt thou remember how at the Rangar-leet a certain cot-carle made thirteen stripes on thine head, and thou tookest therefor thirteen ewes with their sucklings : then meseems thou wilt deem the token good enow."

Thorgeir held his peace, and as for Jarnskeggi and Skegbroddi they would have no words with Egil.

Then said Ufeig: "Now shall I sing you a stave for the better memory of this Thing, and the ending of the case that hath here betid."

This grove of metal mostly Shall find its honour minished ; Glad give I forth such tidings, Of the strife 'twixt dwarf and giant. The land of hats of high ones Have I the unwealthy hoodwinked, And in the eyes of chieftains Cast I the dust of gold rings.

Egil answered : "Well mayest thou boast over it, for no one man hath so fearlessly flown in the face of so many great men."

Now after this men went home to their booths, and Gellir spake to Egil, saying: "I will that we hold us both together with our men." And they did so.

Much muttering of threats there was for the rest of the Thing, and the Banded Men were exceeding ill-content with this ending of the case. As for that money no man would have it, and it kicked about the meads there.

Now men ride home from the Thing.

Chapter 12 - Of Odd's Voyage and his Wedding.

Now that father and son meet, and Odd was now ready dight for sea. So Ufeig tells Odd that he has given the Banded Men self-doom.

"Most miserable man" said Odd, "to make such ending of the case!"

Saith Ufeig: "All is not lost yet, kinsman," and therewith he tells him of the whole process of the case, and how that he has wooed a wife for him. Odd thanks him well for his help, and deems he has pushed the case far beyond what he had thought might be; and now he says that Ufeig shall never lack money.

"Thou shalt depart now," said Ufeig, "as thou wert minded; but the wedding shall be holden at Mel in six weeks space." Thereafter departed the father and son in all love; but Odd put to sea, and the wind served him to Thorgeirs-firth, where there were lying certain chapmen; there the wind failed them, and they lay there some nights. Odd thought the wind long a-coming, so he went up on to a high fell, and thence saw that there was wind in another quarter outside: then he went back to his ship and bade flit her out of the firth ; the Eastmen mocked them, saying that it was a long row to Norway; but Odd said: "How may we wot but that ye shall bide us here?"

So when they were come out of the firth straightway was the wind fair, and they struck not sail before they came to the Orkneys : there Odd bought malt and corn, and abode there awhile and arrayed his ship. But even so soon as he was ready came an east wind, and they sailed ; weather full fair they had, and came to Thorgeirs-firth and found the chapmen still there. Then Odd sailed west along the land, and came to Midfirth when he had now been away seven weeks.

So was the bridal dight, and there lacked not for good cheer and plenteous: much folk came thither; there were Gellir and Egil, and many other great men.

The feast was holden well and gloriously, and men deemed no better wedding had been holden here in the land.

So when the feast was spent, then were men led out with great gifts, but most of wealth went to Gellir's share.

Then spake Gellir to Odd: "I would that Egil were well treated; for he is full worthy thereof."

"Meseemeth," said Odd, "that my father hath already done well by him."

"Yea, but do thou better that!" said Gellir.

So Gellir rode away, he and his. Egil also rideth away, and Odd bringeth him on his road, and thanketh him for his help : "I may not do so well by thee as should be," said he, "but I have let drive yesterday south to Burg sixty wethers and two oxen, and they will abide thee at home: nor will I ever treat thee but well whiles we both live."

So they parted, and Egil was right well pleased, and they bound fast their friendship. So fared Egil home to Burg.

Chapter 13 - Of the Ending of Uspak.

That same harvest gathereth Hermund folk, and fareth out to Hwammsleet, being minded for Burg to burn Egil in his house: but when they came out by Valfell, they heard as if a string twanged up in the fell, and thereon Hermund felt a sickness, and a smart under his arm, and they had to turn back, and the sickness waxed heavy upon him; and when they were come by Thorgaut-stead they had to lift him off, and then they fared to Sidamuli for a priest, but when he came Hermund was speechless; so the priest abode by him, and on a time as the priest looked on him there came a murmur on to his lips : "Two hundreds in the ghyll, two hundreds ih the ghyll!"

And therewithal he gave up the ghost, and so ended his life-days, even as is here said.

Now abideth Odd at his house in great estate ; and his wife he loveth well.

All this while nought had been heard of Uspak: a man named Mar married Swala; he was the son of Hildi; he took up his abode at Swalastead; a brother he had named Bialfi, half-witted, but a strong man. There was one named Bergthor, who dwelt at Bodvarsknolls: he had summed up the case when Uspak was outlawed ; and so on an eve at Bodvarsknolls, when men were sitting by the fires, it fell out that one came and smote on the door and bade the master come out; but the master wotted that Uspak was come there, and said that he would nowise go out. Uspak egged him much thereto, but none the more would he go, and all others he forbade to stir abroad; so they two parted. But on the morrow when women came to the byre, lo! nine cows wounded to death. This was heard of far and wide.

Again, as time wore on, it befell that a man came to Swalastead, and into the hall wherein slept Mar: that man went up to the bed, and thrust Mar through with a sax. It was Uspak, and he sang:

Drew I new-grinded
Glaive from scabbard,
Against the maw
Of Mar I sped it,
So sore I grudged
That son of Hildi
The breast of Swala
Shapely fashioned.

Even therewith, as he turned toward the door, up sprang Bialfi, and thrust at him with a whittle.

Uspak went to a house called Burgknolls, and declared the slaying there; then he went his ways, and nought was heard of him for a while. The slaying of Mar was heard of far and wide, and deemed a dreadful hap. Then came this tidings, that the best stallions Odd owned, five together, were found dead, which deed folk laid on Uspak. But now a long while wore, and nought was heard of him; but in harvest, when men went after the wethers, they found a cave in certain rocks, and in the cave a dead man, beside whom stood a basin of blood as black as tar. This was Uspak, and folk deemed that the hurt Bialfi had given him must have grieved him, and that he had died from want of help: so ended his life-days. It is not told that there was any blood-suit for the slaying of Mar, or the slaying of Uspak.

Odd abode at Mel till his old age, and was deemed a most noble man ; from him are come the Midfirthers, Snorri Kalfson, and many other great men.

Ever after endured the goodwill and kindly affection between the father and son. And here endeth this story.